

On the Waste Front—Update

Coming to a neighborhood near you: Food scraps to compost

On November 4, MCL held a Breakfast Forum on the status of food waste collection in Marin and included a report on progress in the MCL January–February *Newsletter*. As of March 1, 2011, collection efforts will expand to include San Rafael. (A rate hike to support the service was approved for that city on February 8.) According to the *Marin IJ* (February 9, 2011), Marin Sanitary Service’s expansion plan also includes Larkspur, Ross, San Anselmo, and several other jurisdictions, all of which must also approve rate hikes to enable the weekly pick-up of food scraps along with green waste. A pilot program in Fairfax, Sleepy Hollow, and parts of Lucas Valley and unincorporated neighborhoods has been in effect since April 2010. Neighborhoods and communities in Southern Marin served by Tamalpais Community Services District and Mill Valley Refuse Service Inc. instituted similar weekly food scrap pick-up last year. In northern Marin,

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Linking land use and transportation in Marin SB 375 is on its way



A bicycle commuter joins fellow Larkspur Ferry passengers for the morning commute to San Francisco. SB 375 seeks to link land use and transportation in a way that will encourage fewer car trips and promote public transit or alternative modes such as these.

Dru Parker

In its January–February 2009 *Newsletter*, MCL featured an article about SB 375—sometimes called the “anti-sprawl” or the “sustainable development” bill. The bill had been passed by the legislature in late 2008 with the support of MCL and many other environmental interests, although few fully understood it. Two years later, SB 375, while being gradually implemented by regional planning agencies with limited local input, is for most people as abstract now as it was then—an arcane planning policy, remote from public view. A key part of the bill that is about to surface in Marin and other local communities will raise questions and challenges. MCL will try to anticipate some of the questions and clarify important elements in this and subsequent newsletter issues.

Review of SB 375 Basics

In simplest terms, SB 375 seeks to limit the effects of climate change by linking land use to transportation, thereby reducing vehicular greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promoting livable, healthy communities.

The logic of SB 375 is based on the notion that if communities are designed to be more compact and closer to shops, services and transit, and if key open space and agricultural areas remain protected, people will drive less and communities will benefit overall. Instead of relying on their cars for everyday life, they will have the option of walking, biking, or taking public transit. Planners have been lauding this form of compact development as “transit oriented development” (TOD) for a number of years. A more recent term, “sustainable development,” is roughly equivalent. TOD has its critics (MCL has reserved judgment because of some issues listed below), but with the urgency of climate change, the potential for compact, walk-able communities near public transit to reduce GHG emissions from autos and light trucks takes on new promise.

Compact development is not a new idea as a substitute for sprawl. Before the passage of SB 375, it was being promoted in region-wide planning to guide future development

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Coming Up on May 18

A Public Forum

Housing in Marin: Needs and Constraints

Co-sponsored by MCL, the League of Women Voters and the Marin Environmental Housing Collaborative.

Pickleweed Community Center, San Rafael, 7:00 - 9:30 PM. For details, go to marinconservationleague.org.

A Message from the President: Weather and climate—planning land use for different timeframes



It is difficult in these chilly days of late February with snow forecast for the weekend—like the snow of February 1976 that blanketed the Bay Area and preceded two years of record-breaking drought—to overcome the vagaries of the weather and focus on climate, especially long-term global warming, or climate change. No one denies the reality of weather, and most accept the reality of climate change, but we experience them in different ways and must make our plans in two different timeframes. Two articles in this Newsletter illustrate this duality. The first timeframe is immediate, or at least near-term, such as a rock star deciding to subdivide his ranch to create more upscale home sites in Lucas Valley (see Page 3). It will take several years of environmental review and planning process to gratify his ambition (we have few details about the proposal at this point), but eventually something may be built. We deal with proposals like this every day and use tools at our disposal, like the Countywide Plan, Development Code, community plans, and the California Environmental Quality Act

(CEQA) to evaluate impacts and merits. The “future” is limited at most to the horizon of the Countywide Plan. In the meantime, land owners have been granted certain entitlements, like zoning.

The second timeframe is long-term. Climate change requires us to plan for a future we cannot see except in statistical terms. Since climate is derived from extremes, averages, and trends, forecasting is imprecise and not always predictable. In addressing climate change, we are now identifying sources and using many tools to mitigate—i.e., reduce concentrations of—greenhouse gases (GHGs) by curbing emissions. SB 375 (see page 1) offers tools that focus on one source, but it’s a major one—autos and light trucks—for which we all share responsibility. On the premise that more compact, transit-oriented communities can reduce dependence on auto trips and thereby reduce GHGs, the bill proposes strategies to reconfigure land use patterns of long standing. This is a little like slowing and redirecting the Titanic: can the momentum of everyday planning process be slowed long enough to examine the mechanics of how to change direction? Do we have a choice over the long term?

It is particularly difficult when long-term and short-term thinking overlap. Since

climate change is already with us, we must *adapt* to climate change even as we *mitigate* the sources. For example, a local applicant has proposed a small and otherwise benign mixed-use grocery and condominium development—in the near-term, a reasonable proposal. But it happens to be in an area that, even by conservative estimates, could be under a couple of feet of water as sea levels rise over the next 50 years (See Tam Valley Project, Page 5). According to an April 2009 Bay Conservation and Development Commission report: “*Living with a Rising Bay: Vulnerability and Adaptation in San Francisco Bay and on its Shoreline*,” Marin can anticipate a 15-inch rise in sea level by 2050, and 4 feet, 7 inches by 2100. This will not happen as a steady rise, but rather as an unpredictable series of events—heavy rainfall inundation, extreme high tides, storm surges, and wave action.

Currently we are spending most of our efforts in finding ways to mitigate GHG emissions. Our tools for adaptation are far less advanced. It is the responsibility of local governing bodies and agencies to anticipate the future, and develop adaptive policies and tools in preparation.



Canis latrans, a Tennessee Valley resident, contemplates the implications of SB 375. One of the co-benefits of compact communities is protection of open space and natural resource areas.

Photo by Len Blumin, Flickr Creative Commons

Rocker James Hetfield plans to subdivide Rocking H2 Ranch in Lucas Valley

Metallica frontman James Hetfield's proposal to subdivide a portion of his 1,150-acre ranch holdings above Lucas Valley was recently announced in the *Marin IJ*. The proposal is still at a conceptual "pre-application" stage with County Planning. Hetfield intends to develop 27 one-acre homesites on the lower portions of his ranch property opposite the Westgate subdivision on Lucas Valley Road and leave open the option of adding seven low and moderate-income homes. As currently planned, the residences would be between 3,100 and 4,900 sq. ft., similar to homes in the Westgate subdivision. The development area also lies across Lucas Valley Road from LucasFilm's project on Grady Ranch, which is undergoing environmental review.

Hetfield is well known as the lead vocalist and co-founder of the heavy metal band Metallica, but locally he is also known as the property owner who erected a fence across the Luiz Ranch fire road two years ago,

cutting off a traditional hiking and biking connection between the Terra Linda and Loma Alta Open Space Preserves. To bypass that barrier, the County Open Space District proposed a connecting trail across lands of San Domenico School. This "680 Trail" has been the subject of extensive environmental review and will start construction next summer. Hetfield's consulting planners offer a number of benefits for his proposal, such as allowing the 440 acres already dedicated to MCOSD on an adjacent ranch to remain as open space, putting in a public trail connecting Lucas Valley with the new 680 Trail, and reducing the development potential of upper Lucas Valley by 77 units.

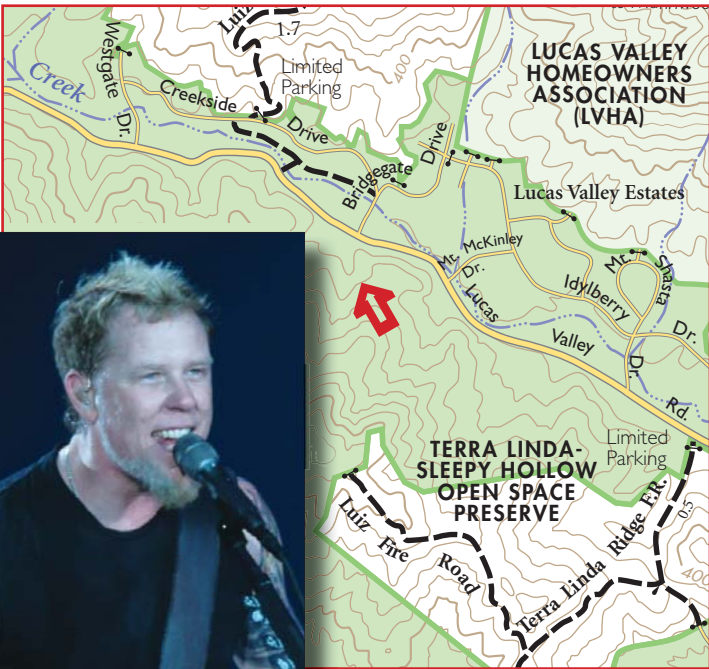
MCL is withholding judgment on Hetfield's proposal until more details are known. However, MCL is concerned about the rich biological resources of the area, as encountered in environmental review of the 680 Trail. The low density of the proposed development (one-acre homesites) is not true clustering and will require the clearing of vegetation not only for the homes themselves, but also for accompanying "hardscaping" (e.g., patios, pools, accessory structures, etc.) and for clear zones and other fuel reduction treatments now required in the wildland-urban interface. Taken together,

these actions will fragment a substantial area of wildlife habitat. The development also would perpetuate a sprawl pattern of vehicle-dependent development. Water requirements are still unknown. Formal review is unlikely to occur this year, but MCL will comment on the application when it is filed with the County.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary has applied to subdivide Strawberry campus

For 60 years the Strawberry Peninsula has been home to the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (GGBTS). From a modest beginning, it has gone through a number of expansions and transformations, the most recent of which was an approved Master Plan in 1982, parts of which have been implemented. These days, course work at the Seminary increasingly can be done online, so the Seminary no longer needs all of its land for resident housing. Its campus is also prime real estate. The Seminary has now applied to the County to amend its Master Plan and subdivide the 126-acre campus. To complete the application and conduct environmental review will take more than a year. In the meantime, the proposal is the largest development proposal in Marin for some years and merits a brief review.

The 1982 Master Plan allowed the GGBTS to add 93 new dwelling units, primarily for faculty and students. The amended plan also proposes 93 units, but the term "unit" is somewhat deceiving. The new "units" actually total 117, but 24 existing dormitory units will be removed. The new units range in size from 3,900 sq. ft. private residences (nine of which are planned); to 2,400 sq. ft. "cottages"; to 1,750-1,930 sq. ft. flats and townhouses; and finally, to smaller faculty and student townhouse/apartments on the campus. It is unlikely that the previous faculty and student units permitted under the 1982 Master Plan approached this size. Also proposed is a new 16,000 sq. ft chapel on a top knoll with unimpeded views of the Bay and San



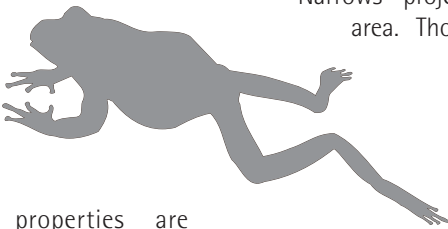
The arrow indicates the general location of the subdivision proposed by property owner James Hetfield (inset)

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Status Updates

Marin–Sonoma Narrows project

A year has gone by since we featured the Marin–Sonoma Narrows Highway 101 Improvement Project (*Newsletter January–February 2010*). At that time the FEIR had been completed but mitigation for loss of habitat of the endangered California red-legged frog remained unresolved, a situation which is today unchanged. Negotiations continue between CalTrans and two different West Marin land owners to determine where a 204-acre conservation easement will be established to mitigate impacts to the frog habitat in the Narrows project area. Those



properties are Lawson's Landing at Dillon Beach, and the Barboni Ranch property near Soulejule Reservoir.

In the meantime, construction of the long-planned project is beginning. A recent information open house held on January 31 in Novato was the first opportunity in several years for public exposure to this project. Although funding is not yet assured for all phases of the project, construction-related activities have begun on an HOV lane in Segment A, which extends from Route 37 to Atherton Avenue. (Segments B and C extend northward to north of the Corona Road Overcrossing in Petaluma.) Contracts for construction of various elements of the project will continue to Winter 2013, with follow-up landscaping extending into 2017.

Among other environmental issues of concern, MCL criticized the need for filling wetlands to construct a frontage road and bicycle path running south from Redwood Landfill to provide access to Mira Monte Marina, and MCL opposed locating a massive interchange in the vicinity of the Marin–Sonoma County line at San Antonio Creek. The latter issue was resolved by shifting the interchange south to the Redwood Landfill overpass, which will be expanded, with considerable loss of woodland trees. The frontage road remains in the plans. Mitigation

for loss of about eight acres of wetlands is still being negotiated.

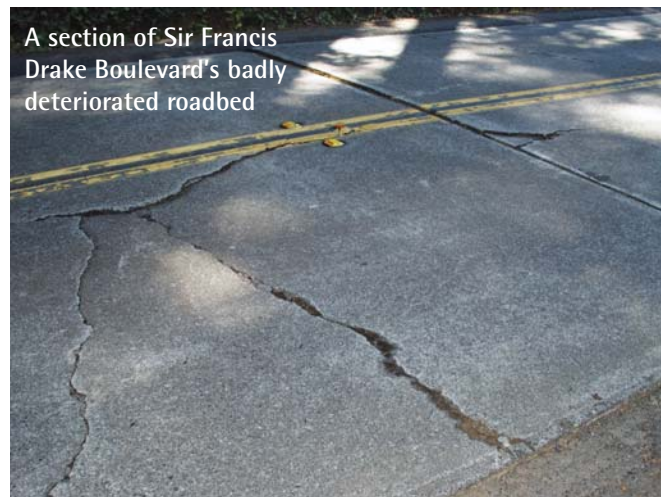
Sir Francis Drake Blvd. rehabilitation

We last reported on the County's proposed roadway improvements to Sir Francis Drake Boulevard through Samuel P. Taylor State Park in the September–October 2010 *Newsletter*. At that time the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was under public review. The Final EIR, which was released in January, generally responds to MCL's comments on the Draft as well as to those of numerous other reviewers. The project would resurface 5.2 miles of badly degraded roadway pavement, pave five pullouts and remove more than 20 informal pullouts, construct a 200–250 foot retaining wall for slope repair between the roadway and Lagunitas Creek, and replace culverts and make other drainage improvements.

This section of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard runs through one of Marin's most popular State Parks and is adjacent to Lagunitas Creek, habitat for the endangered Coho salmon and threatened steelhead. It is a particularly sensitive site for a major construction project.

As a consequence, MCL has two major environmental concerns: first and foremost, protecting water quality in Lagunitas Creek; and second, minimizing the removal of mature redwood trees that edge, and in a few cases intrude into, the roadway. The "environmentally superior alternative" limits tree removal to three small coast redwoods and five California bay trees. The FEIR also evaluates an "Option A," which, if implemented, would widen and/or realign several sections of roadway to improve sight distance, a safety consideration. MCL opposes this option because it would require the removal of eight redwood trees ranging in diameter from 24 to 95 inches, and one 35-foot tall coast live oak.

Although the FEIR resolved some issues, MCL continues to be concerned that primary responsibility for monitoring dozens of mitigation measures will be in the hands of the County Department of Public Works, which is also the project's proponent and has limited staff resources. Because numerous maintenance measures will be required to protect water quality during construction, MCL has recommended that an objective, independent party be contracted by the County to monitor mitigation measures.



A section of Sir Francis Drake Boulevard's badly deteriorated roadbed

Alta Robles, Paradise Drive, Tiburon

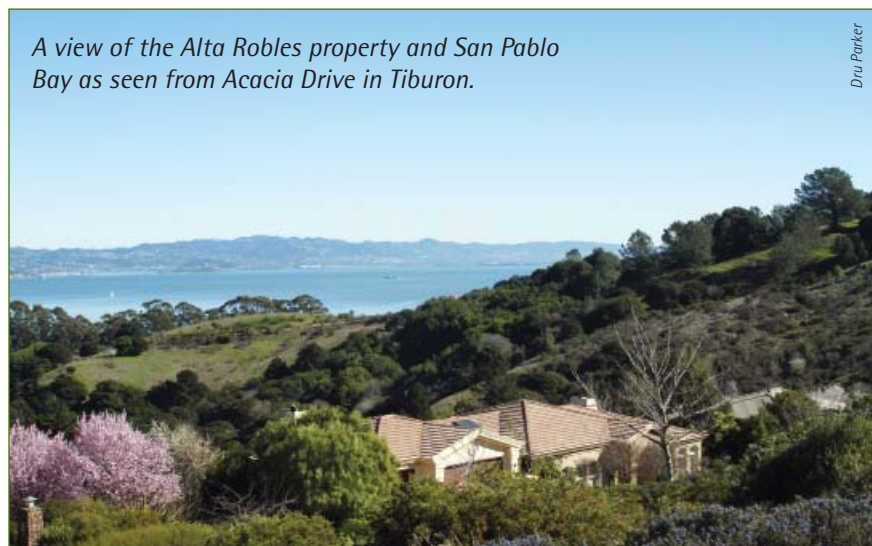
This 52-acre development project between Paradise Drive and Hacienda in Tiburon has received only passing mention in previous MCL Newsletters. Plans for a 14 unit residential planned development ("Alta Robles") were initiated several years ago. Because the site contains biological and aesthetic resources of county-wide significance, and the site has numerous landslides and sensitive hydrology, MCL has tracked the project throughout environmental review, beginning with the scope of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) in August of 2007, up to a recent hearing on the Final EIR and merits of the project before the Tiburon Planning Commission.

MCL has also followed this and other developments along Paradise Drive because

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Status Updates *from page 4*

of their cumulative impacts on habitat fragmentation and increasing traffic along the narrow, winding and scenic roadway. MCL also opposes the Paradise Drive trend towards permitting more mega-houses that is inexorably leading to a new "standard" of 8,000 sq. ft. (See *President's Message, May–June 2010 Newsletter*).



A view of the Alta Robles property and San Pablo Bay as seen from Acacia Drive in Tiburon.

Dru Parker

MCL has consistently stated that what the applicant has proposed—13 residences in addition to one existing, ranging in size from 6,500 to roughly 8,000 sq. ft.—is too much for the site. The EIR described the sensitivities of the site, such as the presence of native serpentine grasslands, significant ridgelines protected by Tiburon General Plan policy, and 18 landslides requiring repair, but it failed to offer a meaningful alternative that would substantially avoid or reduce significant impacts by limiting the number of residences and/or reducing their sizes.

After more than a year's delay, the applicant (the Rabin family, who own the existing home) has agreed to reduce a few homes to 4,800 sq. ft. and set back one residence from Paradise Drive. Additionally, the project must also repair all landslides with retaining walls, sub-drains, and other repairs in order to accommodate the homes. The applicant has refused to consider a lesser number of homes. Instead, the project offers many shades of "green"—LEED certification, planted roofs, architect-designed homes built into the land—none of which address the key problem: too many overly large homes on a highly constrained site. Even with the

promised designs (can these be assured as the project goes through individual home permitting and construction that could take years?), the development will be visually intrusive on the landscape. Moreover, the project sets a bad precedent in that only with extensive mitigation will it conform to numerous Tiburon General Plan 2020 policies and Zoning Ordinance.

Tam Valley project raises question of sea level rise

In any other location, the proposal by Southern Oil Company to construct a 5,913 square foot building grocery store and delicatessen with three second-floor condominium residential units (one of them affordable) on a roughly half-acre disturbed site would be considered totally appropriate. The level site north of Shoreline Highway in the Manzanita Area of the unincorporated community of Tamalpais Valley was originally developed as a gasoline service station, which was removed in 1994. A shared driveway from Shoreline Highway provides access to other commercial uses, including Frantoio Ristorante, a hotel and a two-story complex of small offices.

This particular location raises some issues that are indicative of the need for policies that the County and Bay shoreline communities of Marin will have to consider in coming years—development in areas subject to sea level rise. The 25,557 square foot property is on filled

marshland of Richardson Bay, approximately 400 feet south of the tidal Coyote Creek and 500 feet southwest of the Bay shoreline. During a recent period of high tides, the site was flooded, a chronic condition in the area. Marin Conservation League is concerned that the project is proposed in an area of existing flood hazard, which will be exacerbated by sea level rise, and that existing policies do not fully address this future condition.

The Negative Declaration for the project states the following: "The design of the project would provide a finished floor elevation above the top of the slab at 13.08 feet NAVD (roughly equivalent to Mean Sea Level) where the ground elevation will be leveled to 9.7 feet NAVD. The height of the finished floor would account for settlement of the structure within 100 years and would maintain compliance with the 100-year base flood elevation. Sea level rise will likely change the base flood elevation over this time frame, and it is recommended that the building design include adjustable connections to the foundation to allow for raising the structure above the base flood elevation after long-term settlement and sea level rise. No significant effects." (Emphasis added.)

Sea level rise cannot be predicted with any precision, but we do know that it will occur



Dru Parker

Story poles mark the 150 Shoreline site

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Events

MCL's Annual Dinner on April 15 to Feature Peter Gleick, Environmental Awards

Marin Conservation League is honored to be joined at our Annual Dinner on April 15, 2011, by internationally recognized water expert **Dr. Peter Gleick**, who will be the guest speaker. The event, which also features the annual presentation of MCL's Awards for Environmental Achievement, will be held at the Key Room in the New Beginnings Center at Homeward Bound in south Novato.

Dr. Gleick, co-founder and President of **Pacific Institute** and a MacArthur Fellow, is one of the world's leading authorities on water. In his ongoing quest for rational water policy, he has authored many books, articles, and blogs. For a number of years, he has coauthored and edited the biennial series *The World's Water*, examining global issues around use and misuse of our freshwater resources. The sixth volume in the series (2008–09) addressed such topics as "peak water" (see side-bar) and "The Water Content of Things"—from potato chips to microchips. In his most recent book *Bottled and Sold: The Story Behind Our Obsession with Bottled Water* (Island Press, 2010) Gleick examines how drinking water has become a commodity and been branded over the past 30 years, turning what was once a free natural resource into a multibillion-dollar global industry.

Tickets are \$75. Pre-register at marinconservationleague.org/events.

The evening's program will include the presentation of MCL's **2011 Awards for Environmental Leadership**. The *Peter Behr Lifetime Achievement Award* will be awarded to botanist **Wilma Follette** of Sausalito, founder in 1973 of the Marin Chapter of California Native Plant Society. Wilma is well known for the weekly native plant walks that she led for 30 years into every corner of Marin County.

Marla Lafer, Water Quality Specialist formerly with the State Water Resources Control Board and currently with the San Francisco Bay Region Water Quality Control



Board will receive the *Marin Green Award for Environmental Leadership* for her exceptional role in establishing monthly permit coordination meetings for the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (MCSTOPP). The purpose of the meetings is to bring landowners together with local public agencies and assist them with initial technical review and permitting for projects affecting creeks and wetlands.

The 2011 *Ted Wellman Water Award* will go to **Cynthia Koehler**, Senior Attorney and California Water Legislative Director with Environmental Defense Fund. She has been a tireless advocate for ecosystem restoration in the Delta and for water conservation.

MCL turns to West Marin and **Chileno Valley Ranch**, owned and operated by **Mike and Sally Gale**, for the *John M. McPhail, Jr. Green Business Award*. The Gales raise primarily grass-fed beef and organic apples and take great care to protect and preserve the creeks, fish, birds, and native plants and animals on the Ranch.

This year, MCL will add a special award to honor Supervisor **Hal Brown** for his 28 years of service as the representative of District 2. Hal has consistently made environmentally

"We struggle from one year to the next, hoping for rain. We refuse to measure and monitor all of our water uses in a system with limits. We shy away from needed conversations about water use priorities and rights. As a result, we're racing toward peak water limits and we can no longer afford to pretend all the water we want will be available, when we want it, at a cheap price, without consequences. A wet December and January doesn't change that reality."

—Dr. Peter Gleick, from "Three Definitions of Peak Water." Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/blogs/gleick/index#ixzz1DPnydFZb>

sound decisions a top priority, not only in his district but throughout the County.

The Marin Conservation League *Volunteer Award* will be announced at the event.

MCL is very grateful to major sponsor **Bank of Marin** and all the local businesses who have graciously donated raffle prizes. The no-host reception will begin at 5:30 pm, to be followed by the dinner and program at 6:30 pm. Fresh Starts Catering will provide the organic dinner buffet.

The Key Room, part of Homeward Bound's New Beginnings Center, is located at **1385 N. Hamilton Parkway, Novato** (behind the Courtyard by Marriott at the north end of Hamilton). **Tickets are \$75 per person and invitations are in the mail. Space is limited and no tickets will be sold at the door.** Contact MCL at 415.485.6257 or visit marinconservationleague.org to pre-register by April 1.

Events—Walks into History

Hamilton History Walk

The February 12 Walk Into History was attended by more than 50 people interested in how the former airfield was transformed into a planned community and a massive wetland restoration. The group walked to the top of Reservoir Hill (right) to get an overview of the Hamilton Wetlands Restoration Project. Along the way, Gail Wilhelm, former Marin County Supervisor, related how she had become involved as a Novato citizen in fighting to end several decades of speculation about Hamilton's future as a possible commercial airport.



Walk photos by Greg Zitney



At the wetland restoration overlook (left), engineer Tony Williams gave an informative presentation on the history of the restoration project and its technical challenges in serving the dual purposes of restoring San Pablo Bay wetlands and disposing of "clean" dredge materials from the deepening of Port of Oakland harbor. The group walked along the main levee that separates homes and the rehabilitated hangars from the former runway, now buried under several feet of bay mud. The walk concluded with a tour of the Hamilton History Museum—converted from a firehouse by volunteers.

MCL's next Walk Into History will be April 30th on Ring Mountain

The serpentinite-rich soil of Ring Mountain (*right*), on the Tiburon peninsula, has allowed species of plants to evolve which grow nowhere else on earth. On April 30, join MCL for a wildflower walk and learn the history of the lengthy fight to limit development on the mountain until the Nature Conservancy was able to establish the preserve in 1983. Twelve years later the property of about 400 acres was transferred to the Marin County Open Space District, which now manages the preserve.

Visit marinconservationleague.org/events or call 415-485-6257 to register for this **free** walk. Parking and transportation details are forthcoming.



Dru Parker

Senator Leno outlines the issues at Feb. 4th Business Breakfast

The February 4th Business-Environment Breakfast at the Embassy Suites featured District 3 **Senator Mark Leno**, Chair of the Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee, who gave a frank and oft-depressing overview of California's budget crisis. "In order to prevent the worsening of our fiscal situation in the next few months, it is also critical to consider new revenue and thoughtful tax reform and ask voters to weigh in on what they want from their government and how to pay for it."

The Breakfast was sponsored in part by **Tina McArthur** of Pacific Union Real Estate's "M&M Team" and graciously emceed by **Linda Novy**. MCL welcomes your ideas for future Business-Environment Breakfasts. Email your suggestions to mcl@marinconservationleague.org.



Photo by Tim Rosenfeld

Senator Mark Leno at the MCL Breakfast on February 4th at the Embassy Suites in San Rafael.

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Annual Meeting and Election April 15, 2011

Proposed Slate of Officers and Directors for 2011—2012

The Marin Conservation League's Nominating Committee, chaired by Jana Haehl, has nominated the following persons for election as MCL officers and Directors at the 2011 Annual Meeting and Election.

All MCL members who attend the meeting are eligible to vote.

Nominated for Election as Officers for 2011—2012

President—Susan Stompe, Novato

First Vice President—Brett Powell, Mill Valley

Second Vice President—Nona Dennis, Mill Valley

Secretary—Bruce Fullerton, Mill Valley

Treasurer—Ken Drexler, Fairfax

Nominated for Election as Directors

Term ending April 2014

Priscilla Bull Kentfield

Jonathan Elam* San Anselmo

Jana Haehl Corte Madera

Frederick Holden* Belvedere

Vicki Nichols Sausalito

David Schnapf* Greenbrae

Term ending April 2013

Gail Wilhelm* Novato

Term ending April 2012

Chris Yalonis* Fairfax

**New to the MCL Board*

The following Directors will continue to serve unexpired terms:

Term ending April 2013

Larry Smith Nicasio

Dan Sonnet San Rafael

Periann Wood Mill Valley

Term ending April 2012

Betsy Bikle Mill Valley

Michelle Passero Mill Valley

Amy Marr Mill Valley

Bob Spofford San Rafael

Ann Thomas Corte Madera

150 Shoreline *from Page 6*

not as a gradual phenomenon but rather in episodic events such as extreme high tides and storm surges. Even this project's extraordinary construction techniques (being able to raise the building) will not adequately address this eventuality.

Although this previously developed site is surrounded by other buildings, and the proposed use is consistent with applicable plans, the proposal raises issues that jurisdictions fronting the Bay are going to have to start addressing in a broader way. The County, working with other Marin jurisdictions on the Bay and working with data that has been compiled by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission,

should initiate studies to determine where sea level rise is most likely to affect low-lying areas, and what comprehensive planning policies should address these changes. Properties surrounding Richardson Bay are particularly vulnerable. It is not enough to mitigate the impacts of individual projects; these mitigations could have broader off-site impacts. We have commented on this particular project because we see it as an example of future potential county and community problems.

SB 375 *from Page 1*

and transportation investments in the Bay Region (see FOCUS at bayareavision.org). Under this region-wide "focused" approach, areas best suited for compact development were identified (Priority Development Areas) as were areas best suited for conservation (Priority Conservation Areas). SB 375 made compact development "official" by mandating that the State's 18 metropolitan planning regions demonstrate their ability to provide sufficient housing and livable

The current Bay Region population of 7.2 million is projected to rise to 9 million by 2035.

communities affordable to all income levels for projected population growth by 2035, and simultaneously meet targets for reducing GHG emissions. (The current Bay region population of 7.2 million is projected to rise to 9 million by 2035.)

AB 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act), which was passed in 2006, established State goals and schedules for reducing GHG emissions, a major contributor to climate change. All major emitting sectors of the economy are subject to the State goals. The transportation sector alone accounts for 38 percent of GHGs in the state, with a higher percentage in Marin. According to analysts, greater fuel efficiency and reduced carbon fuels for vehicles will not be enough to reduce this source of GHGs. Shifts in land development patterns and transportation also will be necessary. That is where SB 375 comes in. It links new development with transportation in a way that will encourage people to drive less and shorter distances (i.e., reduce vehicle miles traveled, or VMT) and thereby reduce their GHG emissions. SB 375 also has a complementary focus of facilitating other public benefits, such as identifying and protecting important natural and agricultural resources, assets that provide many benefits to Marin. Marin ranks high among the counties in vehicle miles traveled, but also provides significant natural resources that benefit the entire Bay region.

Putting SB 375 to work

For the past two years, most of the planning actions required by SB 375 have



Don Parker

Projects with increased densities, such as the 84-unit San Rafael Commons, will become more prevalent under the provisions of SB 375.

taken place at state and regional levels, with minor input from local governments and those interested and able to attend multiple meetings. In the Bay region, the responsibility for implementing SB 375 is shared by Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), in partnership with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. Marin's primary connections with SB 375 planning have been through our own Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM) and representatives from Marin County governments to ABAG and MTC.

The first obligation of SB 375 was for the California Air Resources Board to establish targets for reducing GHGs for each metropolitan planning region of California and to provide guidance on the elements that should comprise a "Sustainable Communities Strategy." After two years of complicated modeling based on existing sources of GHGs and projected growth, targets were approved in September 2010. **The targets for the San Francisco Bay Region call for a 7 percent reduction in GHG emissions per capita by 2020 and a 15 percent per capita reduction by 2035, relative to 2005 levels.** Because the targets are based on per capita emissions rather than gross emissions, they still allow for an increase in absolute emissions in each region due to population growth. Even with this allowance, meeting the approved emission reduction targets will take development strategies that foster a more compact land use pattern throughout the region, more efficient public transit, and policy tools such as travel demand management (employer trip reduction incentives like van pooling and telecommuting), road pricing

(e.g., HOT lanes, now called Managed Lanes), as well as improved fuel efficiency.

The second phase—and central task of the bill—got underway last year to be completed in early 2012, that is, developing a Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) for each of the metropolitan planning regions. In the San Francisco Bay region, metropolitan planning covers nine counties and 101 towns and cities. The basic objectives of the SCS are twofold: 1) Provide a new 25-year land use strategy for the Bay region that identifies areas to house all of the region's current and anticipated population, including all income groups; and 2) provide a land use pattern which, when integrated with the transportation system, will reduce GHGs from automobiles and light trucks to meet the approved targets. If the SCS is unable to meet emission reduction targets, then MTC must develop an Alternative Planning Strategy that could achieve the targets.

A first round draft of the SCS is an "Initial Vision Scenario" and will be presented to local councils and supervisors beginning in March. This will trigger local public workshops between April and July. Marin's towns and cities, as well as the County, are scheduling presentations for their councils and boards. The Initial Vision Scenario identifies locations, policies, and strategies for long-term sustainable development in the Bay Area as though there were no constraints. It will be up to local governments to identify locations of greatest potential for such development, such as transit corridors, employment and infill areas, as well as to identify key natural resource and agricultural resources that should remain protected.

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SB 375 *from Page 9*

Taken broadly, the SCS is not just about assigning housing or achieving greenhouse gas targets. Its goal, according to the ABAG web site, *onebayarea.org*, is to prepare the Bay Area for changing circumstances of the 21st century—population growth, climate change, public-health needs, and at the same time protect natural resource and agricultural areas. Ultimately, the SCS land use pattern must be consistent with and supported by the 25-year Bay Regional Transportation Plan, which includes over \$200 billion of federal transportation investment, and it must be consistent with Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers (see below).

SB 375 intersects with RHNA

Planning for affordable housing for all income levels in the Bay Area is an essential task of the SCS. In fact, SB 375 requires ABAG and MTC to identify areas within the region sufficient to house an eight-year projection of the regional housing need. At the same time, the Bay Area's RHNA Plan must allocate housing units within the region that are consistent with the development pattern in the Sustainable Communities Strategy. (See also *onebayarea.org*.)

Controversy continues over the source and rationality of RHNA numbers and target housing densities allocated to Marin County and some of its towns and cities, as well as in many other jurisdictions in the Bay Area. In the May-June MCL Newsletter, we will take up both positive and controversial aspects of SB 375 as it relates to locating affordable housing in Marin.

Issues and challenges

The principles of comfortable, compact,

walk-able communities that lie behind SB 375 make eminently good planning sense. The expectation that habits can be changed and GHG emission reduction goals can be accomplished in the mandated timeframe, however, raises a number of questions and challenges. MCL believes that jurisdictions in Marin will need to consider these and other questions as they take up the first iteration of the regional Sustainable Communities Strategy.

What is a Sustainable Community Strategy and what would it look like?

An SCS can be described, and the Bay Region can even provide working examples, but one size will not fit all cases. Where might Marin be most affected and how is Marin likely to respond as the requirements of SB 375 begin to take form?

Will densification of existing urban areas compromise "community character"? Some progress has already been made to reverse low-density development patterns by promoting housing growth near transit in the Bay region, including San Rafael. Other sites along Marin's 101 urban corridor will need to be identified. Densification and growth will need to be viewed from a local as well as regional perspective.

Can transportation and land use changes alone contain sprawl in Marin? Land use changes alone will be very slow in yielding real reductions in GHG emissions. In the meantime, should Marin County and its cities and towns consider means to slow the momentum of permitting large, low-density market-rate homes on scattered parcels that simply perpetuates a sprawl pattern and Marin's excessively high carbon footprint?

Will transit be sufficiently funded to support the basic premise of compact (TOD) development? The SCS assumes that there will be sufficient funding to increase transit capacity and make other necessary improvements. Can public transit become attractive enough to avoid the local congestion and other unmitigated impacts that can come with additional growth and higher density development?

How will local communities deal with SCS growth projections for 2035, which extend far beyond typical General Plan estimates and policies? The growth numbers for the 25-year SCS planning horizon will be large compared to 8-year RHNA numbers. Will Marin be willing or able to accommodate these growth projections? (Growth cannot be shifted to neighboring counties under SB 375)

What are the environmental limits on where and how much new development can be located? Rising sea levels already place large already developed areas of Marin at threat, making them poor candidates for denser development. New standards for particulates also will limit higher density housing near major roadways. Water supply in Marin is highly constrained.

The goals of SB 375 are to accommodate growth and to address global climate change by careful planning on a regional basis. Although regional planning has a long history in uniting counties and cities in the San Francisco Bay Region in shared solutions, SB 375 will challenge all jurisdictions throughout the region to meet regional goals in a way that also respects their local needs and conditions.



Architectural design can greatly affect the physical appearance of density. On San Rafael's 'C' Street, Centertown (left) and Lone Palm (right) are directly across the street from each other and contain identical numbers of units on identical acreage.



Dru Parker

Seminary *from Page 3*

Francisco.

The most visible area of the proposed new development would be thirty-eight residences on Seminary Point, directly across Richardson Bay from Highway 101 and Richardson Bay overpass. If all are permitted, they would totally transform the wooded Point. To the south and east (Seminary Vista East and West), homes would be added to already developed neighborhoods. At the north end of the campus, smaller townhouses, some for faculty, would be built on the wooded Seminary Knoll, above the intersection of Seminary Drive and Ricardo Road.

Over the past 60 years, Strawberry Peninsula has become almost fully developed and, in some areas, forested with Monterey Pines and other landscaping species. Native plant communities are a rarity. Nonetheless, sensitive wetlands and important open water habitats used heavily by wintering waterfowl and shorebirds surround two sides of the Peninsula. Belloch Lagoon tidal salt marsh, which is connected to the Bay by a slender waterway, already must tolerate runoff and human intrusion from frontage businesses along Highway 101. Arambaru Island on the opposite side of the Peninsula is owned by the Marin County Open Space District. This one-time seal haulout was cut off from Strawberry Spit for protection when the Spit was developed with housing some 20 years

The site for the proposed new chapel boasts a spectacular view of the city (right); "Seminary Vista West" would overlook Richardson Bay (below).



ago. The island is being restored to ecological health by Richardson Bay Audubon Wildlife Center. The entire shoreline where thirteen of the new homes are proposed to front on Seminary Drive would need to be protected,

possibly by code and covenant restrictions, to prevent intrusion into wildlife habitats in the Bay. The prospect of homes and greatly increased human activity along the shoreline, especially on Seminary Point, is one of a number of impacts that MCL will be watching.



Waste *from Page 1*

Novato Sanitation District began collecting food scraps from single family residential customers in late January. School collection of food scraps has been underway for about a

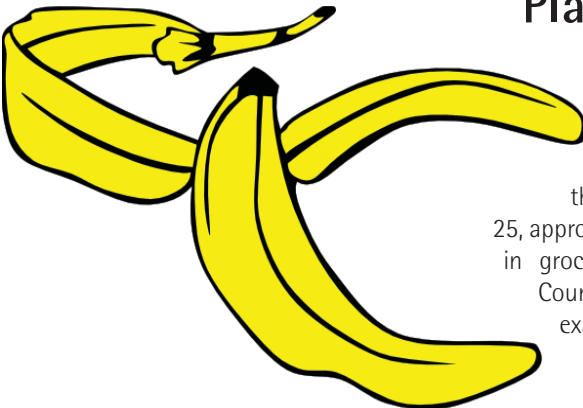
year. Collecting food waste from multifamily complexes, restaurants, and businesses is a goal down the line. Food waste from Novato is taken to Redwood Landfill for processing into compost.

a voter initiative to ban plastic bags received 80 percent approval. The County's action also imposes a 5-cent fee for every paper bag requested by customers.

San Rafael's Community Development Director Bob Brown is organizing an ad hoc committee with representatives from Novato, Mill Valley, Tiburon, Sausalito, and San Anselmo to develop an ordinance that would ban plastic bags and plastic take-out containers. Roger Roberts will represent MCL on this committee. According to Bob Brown, the ordinance will be very similar to the ordinance the Supervisors passed in January. A draft will be ready to present to the public for review in April.

Plastic bag ban may spread to towns and cities

After almost five years of discussion, the Board of Supervisors, on January 25, approved a ban on single-use plastic bags in grocery stores in the unincorporated County. In so doing, they followed the example set by Fairfax in 2009, where



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Monthly Committee Meeting

Schedule (subject to change):

Land Use and Transportation:

1st Wed. of the month, 8:00 - 10:00 AM

Parks & Open Space:

2nd Thurs. of the month, 3:00 - 5:00 PM

North Marin Unit (NMU):

Call 415.485.6257 or see our website
for meeting details.

*Meetings (except for NMU) are at
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Marin Conservation League was founded in
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**MCL'S Annual Dinner is
Friday, April 15! (See page 6)**



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